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Lang Arts, 6

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A Runner’s Triumph over Racism

August 1, 1936, a symphonic fanfare conducted by Richard Strauss proudly announces the arrival of Adolf Hitler, chancellor of Germany, to the spectators of the XIth Olympiad. In alphabetical order forty-nine different countries, the most ever to compete in an Olympics up until that date, march into the stadium bearing their country’s flag. Although the topic of Germany’s ban of Jewish athletes from the Olympics was on everyone’s mind, that didn’t stop seven Jewish male competitors and eighteen African Americans all from the U.S. from competing in the Olympics in Germany. Even though they were pressured to boycott the Games, Jewish athletes showcased enormous courage not only by competing, but winning nine medals in total at the Games. The Jewish were not the only consistently alienated group who’s athletes found success at the Olympics. The African American runner Jesse Owens earned gold at the Games, and found that he was more warmly received in Europe than he ever was in the United States. Jesse Owens, the great Olympian, took a stance against the vicious circle of racism surrounding the Games and became a symbol of great honor and admiration not only for African Americans, but those everywhere when he proved to the world that excellence is achieved through commitment and perseverance and not the color of your skin.